

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, December 17, 1891, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to her husband, Dr. Alexander Graham Bell —
Thursday 17th December 1891 Thursday 17th December 1891 My dear Alec:

It seems ages since we parted and I have missed you and all you imply of love and care and protection horribly. It isn't the same thing to be one unit among many passengers on a great ocean liner and mistress of Beinn Bhreagh with your love and regard making me the centre of everything. Doubtless, however, the change is salutary once in a while.

The children are really very good and thoughtful. Daisy is a nice little one to translate between me and the Captain, and to keep me informed as well as she can of what is being said at table. Elsie is a great relief — she manages far better in every way than I dared to hope — is quite independent of all help about her toilet and isn't very long about it. We were quite punctual at breakfast the first few mornings until unfortunately the children discovered that breakfast waited for the last comer, while as for being punctual at lunch and dinner, why when you know it is going to last about two hours, there doesn't seem much virtue in being very early. I just wish you could sit down to one of our dinners — then you wouldn't complain of the length of ours at Beinn Bhreagh. Did you ever hear of dancing on deck aboard ship before? I never did and I think it gives the clearest idea of the mildness of our air tonight and the smoothness of the sea. I have needed my warm fur cloak but once while sitting on deck and the children have not been sick.

Friday. It is too lovely to stay downstairs so you must be satisfied with pencil. We passed Cape St. Vincent at about 10 this morning — the shore was a most “stern and rock-bound coast” — cruellooking bare cliffs a hundred feet high sinking sharply down to the blue sea as if cut with a ragged knife. Monasteries — big buildings — told of a Catholic country and the bare treeless uplands recalled recollections of Spain. Now the land has fallen back

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into a 2 wide, deep bay shut in by mountains two and four thousand feet high and now sunk out of sight as we pursue our course straight for Gibraltar. The children's coughs have not left them in the complete sudden and mysterious way in mid-ocean that Dr. McKean foretold. Elsie's is very rare, but Daisy's much more frequent than hers — so I have concluded not to expose her at once to the raw, cold atmosphere of Florence, but to go there by degrees. Thus I will stay until Monday in Genoa, then drive to Nervi, stay there and then drive to Rapallo, stay there and then drive to Sestri and from there also drive to Spezzia. From Spezzia go to Pisa by rail so that we get to Florence in about three weeks from now. Both Mr. Storrow and Baedeker recommend the drive, they say it is one of the most beautiful in Italy — like the Corniche I fancy. I think this will be more interesting than staying in one place and going by rail. I will ask Uncle Richard's friend. I have nearly decided to go to the Hotel du Parc as Mr. Goode is going there, but I hanker after the other. Mr. Goode has been as kind and thoughtful and lovely as possible and there is an unusually large number of people who know us through one connection or another. One is a friend of Miss Watson — Mr. McLenon — Mr. McCurdy will know him. He told us of Captain Kay who went to the East Africa Company and died in 2 months of African fever.

Goodbye with much love, Mabel